



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

M. JODI RELL
GOVERNOR

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Governor Rell's Request for Natural Disaster Funds Approved; Low-Interest Agricultural Loans Available

Governor M. Jodi Rell today announced today that U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns has agreed to her request for natural disaster designation, which will provide federal low-interest loans to Connecticut farmers who suffered severe crop losses from the heavy rains and cools temperatures this spring and summer.

"I am pleased that the Department of Agriculture responded favorably to my request," Governor Rell said. "Although I wish we did not need this assistance, these low-interest funds available to farmers in all eight counties will help preserve jobs and help our farming community continue providing nutritious, local produce for our residents, and at fair prices."

On July 21, 2006, the Governor sent a letter to Secretary Johanns, requesting that the Department of Agriculture review damage assessment reports that showed Connecticut's eight counties had experienced sufficient production losses as a result of torrential rains and unseasonably cool weather. Crops included hay, livestock feed corn, sweet corn, strawberries, and pumpkins.

"This determination of Connecticut as a natural disaster designation will bring welcome relief to our farmers and help to maintain the \$2.2 billion contributed annually to our state's economy," Governor Rell added. "Farms throughout Connecticut were hit hard during the growing season, causing many growers to lose 40 to 70 percent their crops. I am pleased relief is being made available to this important Connecticut industry, and I will continue to seize every opportunity to assist our farming community."

The USDA Secretary approved previous requests by Governor Rell for disaster relief for Connecticut farmers in March 2005 and February 2006, for wet weather and drought, respectively. Emergency loan assistance was approved in both declarations. State farmers also were eligible for financial relief after the storms and floods of October 2005. Governor Rell requested a Presidential disaster declaration that made available low-interest loans and USDA Farm Service Agency emergency conservation funding for farmland rehabilitation.

“Our farmers have incurred significant hardship this year due to environmental conditions beyond their control,” said Connecticut Commissioner of Agriculture F. Philip Prelli. “Governor Rell’s request for designation and subsequent financial assistance will allow some farmers who otherwise would be forced to sell off land just to pay their bills to continue to perform their invaluable work.”

“Farm operators in all Connecticut counties are eligible to be considered for these low-interest emergency loans from the USDA Farm Service Agency,” said Secretary Johanns. “FSA will consider each application on its own merit by taking into account the extent of losses, security available, and repayment ability.”

Local Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices can provide affected farmers with further information.

FSA State Office (Tolland): 860-871-2944

Brooklyn Office: 860-774-0224

Norwich Office: 860-859-5218

Torrington Office: 860-626-8852

Wallingford Office: 203-269-7509

Windsor Office: 860-688-7725